

## **Austin Smith hears the 2005 Charlemagne Lecture and ponders what it means**

The Charlemagne Lecture was set up 11 years ago, "to look at contemporary and historical European issues, not from a political or economic standpoint, but from an ethical and moral view" The 2005 Lecture - entitled "Are You a European?" - was given on December 15th by Timothy Garton Ash, who is Professor of European Studies at the University of Oxford, and was chaired by Sir Stephen Wall, former Europe adviser to Tony Blair.

Garton Ash began by highlighting the importance of the question "What does it mean to be European?", in the light of current euro-scepticism. At the time of the unification of his country, the Italian statesman Cavour stated, "Italy has been made - now we must make Italians!" So - "Europe has been made - now we must make Europeans!"

But what are the boundaries of Europe? Several nations have just joined the Community, and more are seeking to join. Where does it end? Traditionally at the Hellespont - a Greek (European) name. But both sides of the Hellespont are in Turkey, and it is properly called Canakkale Bogazi. Is then Turkey part of Europe? Could Europe eventually stretch even beyond Turkey?

We tend to use the old boundaries of Christendom to define Europe. But Garton Ash told how the 15th Century Pope Pius II, following the Turkish capture of Constantinople (Istanbul), had prepared a letter - though he did not send it - to the Turkish Sultan, suggesting that the Islamic Sultan should further Christian unity - by being baptised! So Turkey as part of Europe is not a new idea.

And what of the presence of many residents of Europe who are not of European descent? We still tend to think of Europeans as white-skinned. And even second-generation ethnic citizens tend to think of themselves primarily as members of a nation, rather than of a continent. People might say, "I'm a Turkish German", not "I'm a Turkish European". By contrast U.S. citizens describe themselves as "Afro-Americans", or "Indian-Americans". This combined with the secularity of Europe, makes the phrase "Muslim European" seem almost a contradiction in terms.

However the process of developing a European identity is worth persistence. "We Europeans" was a phrase first used back in 1623 - and by a local lad, Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans. So it's a long haul, and there is a need to involve young people more in the European project. For the time being we shall continue to be British first, and Europeans second. But the new European identity should be developed around shared values such as the rejection of narrow nationalism, and of war as a means of solving internal, and perhaps also external, disputes. Equal rights for all, under the rule of law. And a body which looks outward to the needs of the whole world, not just to parochial European concerns.

